DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 882 HE 023 884

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TITLE	The Volunteer Potential of First-Time Entering Students: Interest Areas and Incentives. Research Report #4-90.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE	90
NOTE	19p.; Not available in paper copy due to poor print quality.
AVAILABLE FROM	Counseling Center, University of Maryland, Shoemaker Bldg., College Park, MD 20742.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Freshmen; Compensation (Remuneration); Higher Education; *Incentives; Influences; Orientation; State Universities; *Student Interests; *Student Organizations; *Student Volunteers; Transfer Students
IDENTIFIERS	University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

A sample of 917 incoming students attending summer orientation at the University of Maryland, College Park, was given a survey assessing their interest in various campus volunteer opportunities. To assess the degree to which level of interest is influenced by the incentives of a monetary award or course credit, students were randomly given one of three forms of the survey. Findings suggested that generally, students did not differentiate among "serving as a volunteer," "earning course credit as a volunteer," and "earning a monetary award as a volunteer." Students were most interested in volunteering for the Homecoming Committee and Maryland Images (a campus recruitment organization), and least interested in volunteering for the Counseling Center and the Health Center. It is concluded that first-time entering students may be most interested in high visibility volunteer positions concerned with promoting the University. Includes 23 references. (JDD)

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This research project was supported by the Counseling Center in cooperation with the Orientation Office, University of Maryland, College Park. Computer time was provided by the Computer Science Center, University of Maryland, College Park. Portions of this paper were presented at the 1990 Maryland Student Affairs Conference, University of Maryland, College Park.

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Summary

First-time entering students at University of Maryland, College Park were given a survey assessing their interest in various campus volunteer opportunities. The relationship between incentives and volunteer interest was also studied. The findings suggested that generally, students did not differentiate among "serving as a volunteer", "earning course credit as a volunteer", and "earning a monetary award as a volunteer".

Overall, students were most interested in volunteering for the the Homecoming Committee and Maryland Images (a campus recruitment organization), and least interested in volunteering for the Counseling Center and the Health Center. It appears that first-time entering students may be most interested in high visibility volunteer positions concerned with promoting the University. That such positions offer the opportunity to interact and possibly socialize with a lot of other people may make them especially appealing to new students.

The Volunteer Potential of First-time Entering Students: Interest Areas and Incentives

Orientation programs for first-time entering students tend to emphasize WHAT THE CAMPUS CAN DO FOR YOU - how various programs, services, and facilities can be used to one's best advantage. Learning to "negotiate the system" at an institution of higher education is indeed an education in itself. As student affairs professionals, we must do all we can to facilitate this process, especially given the evidence that use of campus programs and facilities is related to retention (Astin, 1975, 1977; Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987; Tinto, 1975).

As we encourage students to avail themselves of the myriad of resources on campus, however, we sometimes forget to focus also on WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THE CAMPUS. While this is beginning to sound like a presidential speech, it does reflect the growing sentiment among educators that volunteerism is an essential part of the college education (University presidents urged..., 1986). Accordingly, Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1987) developed a model of volunteer service learning with the following goal:

> Resulting from a values education fostered by service learning experiences, students will move from an egocentric to a more allocentric viewpoint, thereby being able to accept greater responsibility for their immediate community and the larger society.... (p. 4)

To maximize the "volunteer potential" of first-time entering students, we need to understand their interests and motivations. For example, the trend toward vocationalism among students of recent years (Garland, 1985; Parker, 1988; Study Group..., 1984) suggests that they might prefer volunteer positions that are likely to

promote their career aspirations. Garland (1985) cited evidence that students are selecting information-intensive, well-paying professional fields, such as business, law, and engineering (Upcraft, Finney, & Garland, 1984) over people-oriented careers and traditional fields in the arts, humanities, and pure sciences (Astin, 1984; Astin & others, 1984). Research addressing the question of which volunteer opportunities are most attractive to new students can aid the efforts of student affairs professionals charged with recruitment.

While the specific volunteer interests of first-time entering students clearly deserve our attention, perhaps our greatest concern is that they might not get involved at all. Some writers (e.g., Blackburn, 1986; Parker, 1988) have observed that students are becoming more difficult to attract to leadership positions, and the overall success of organized campus activities seems to have ebbed. Parker (1988) suggested that students might be more likely to volunteer with the following incentives:

(1) course credit for campus volunteers
(2) extra credit in regular courses for campus volunteers
(3) required volunteer involvement as part of a regular course
(4) some form of payment for campus volunteers.

According to Miller (1987), leadership programs that award academic credit, or are at least documented on a co-curricular transcript, earn more respect and credibility than those that do not. With regard to payment for volunteers, Ellis (1985) suggested that the following research questions need to be answered:

> What is the effect of giving money--in any quantity--on volunteering? Is it more than an "enabling" factor? Does it provide recognition? Is it received as a form of "earnings" by the volunteer and/or is it seen as such by salaried staff? When do "enabling funds" become a "stipend" and when does a "stipend" become a "salary", and does the level of money involved affect the volunteer work provided? (p. 13)

A 1988 survey of Association of College Unions - International (ACU-I) members found that, in 36% of the Unions represented, program board members received compensation (Miller & Galey, 1988). However, the effect of academic credit or stipends on student volunteer involvement has received little empirical attention, perhaps because the notion of offering incentives to volunteer seems incongruous.

There are, in fact, a number of practical and philosophical reasons why offering incentives or compensation to volunteers may be problematic. Parker (1988) noted that many campus departments do not have it in their budgets to pay student volunteers. When the money is available, the practice of paying volunteers may serve to limit the number of student volunteers that can be accommodated. If course credit is offered, it is inevitable that the volunteer program will attract some students who have no intrinsic motivation to volunteer.

Generally, the "social interest" (Adler, 1964) value of campus volunteerism may be compromised if any type of incentive or compensation is offered. Pearce (1983) compared the attitudes of volunteers and workers for pay in similar organizations and found that volunteers reported greater social and service motivation than

did their paid counterparts. While it is most likely that the difference was based on the divergent motivations people have for volunteering versus seeking a paid position (Boatman, 1987), the volunteer experience itself may actually foster social interest.

A final consideration is that student volunteers stand to lose power and autonomy as they become accountable to those who pay their stipends or award them course grades for their involvement. It is not difficult to anticipate how a student government association officer may find his or her effectiveness as an advocate for students compromised by a stipend from the administration.

After establishing some of the reasons why it might not be desirable to offer campus volunteers academic credit or stipends, we must recognize that it may be in everyone's best interest to do so. If students really can not afford to donate their time and energy, the supply of campus volunteers will dwindle. Campus departments whose operations depend on volunteers will suffer, as will the many individuals who utilize the services of campus volunteers. Perhaps those with the most to lose are the students who cannot or will not volunteer with no incentive: campus volunteerism presents a unique developmental opportunity that may never again present itself after the college years are over.

While student affairs professionals must be prepared to grapple with the many issues around volunteer incentives and compensation, empirical research can facilitate informed decision-making in this area. The purpose of this study was two-fold:

(1) To assess interest in specific volunteer opportunities among first-time entering students.

(2) To assess the degree to which level of interest in specific volunteer opportunities is influenced by the incentives of a monetary award or course credit.

Method

Participants were 917 randomly sampled incoming students attending summer orientation at a large, eastern university. More than 90% of incoming students attend orientation each year.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three forms of the "Campus Involvement Interest Survey" (CIIS), which was patterned after the Situational Attitude Scale (Schwalb & Sedlacek, 1990; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1972). On the CIIS, students were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale their level of interest in each of eight campus volunteer opportunities. The three forms were identical, except that the first referred to "serving as a volunteer", the second referred to "earning academic credit as a volunteer" and the third referred to "earning a monetary award as a volunteer".

Because it was not apparent to students that more than one form of the survey existed, it can be assumed that they responded genuinely to the level of incentive described on their respective forms. A comparison of group means clarified the degree to which interest in campus volunteer involvement was influenced by type of incentive offered.

Data were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the .05 level of significance, with incentive as the

independent variable (3 levels) and the volunteer opportunities as the dependent variables.

Results

Form

The MANOVA was not significant for form. This indicates that generally, students did not differentiate between "serving as a volunteer", "earning academic credit", or "earning a monetary award" when they rated their level of interest in the eight volunteer activities described on the survey.

Volunteer Interest Areas

Based on a rank ordering of group means, we assessed levels of interest in the eight volunteer opportunities presented on the survey. While the homecoming committee and the campus recruitment organization appeared to be the most popular options among first-time entering students, the counseling center and the health center elicited the least interest. See Table 1 for a rank ordering of interest levels in the eight volunteer opportunities, with means and standard deviations.

Insert Table 1 about here

Discussion

When incoming students were asked to rate their level of interest in volunteering for various campus organizations, they did not display increased willingness to volunteer with the incentives of course credit or a monetary award. This finding suggests that

incentives do not have a significant effect on volunteer interest among incoming students.

If first-time entering students are not more likely to volunteer with incentives, there are a number of possible explanations. First, the issue of incentives might not be salient to new students, who have not yet experienced the shortages of time and money that make many students feel compelled to spend their time either studying or working at a part-time job, rather than becoming involved on campus. Related to this, students may only take incentives into account when they are aware that a volunteer position is going to require a large commitment of time and energy. In this study, there was no indication to the students of how demanding the volunteer positions actually would be. Another explanation for the finding is that students may be less concerned with incentives than they are with other aspects of the volunteer experience, such as how it might help them get a job after graduation. Finally, there may be a discrepancy between students' stated interest in volunteering and what they will actually do, the resolution of which is determined partly by incentives offered. To further investigate this possibility, we need to study the degree to which volunteer positions that offer a stipend or course credit attract more students than similar volunteer opportunities that do not offer any incentives.

The finding that incentives did not influence volunteer interest should be interpreted cautiously until more research is conducted on the topic. In this study, no attempt was made to

differentiate students who had some interest in volunteering from those who had none. Because a large random sample of students was surveyed, the responses of the many who were not at all inclined to volunteer may have obscured significant differences among the students who were potentially interested in campus volunteerism. Thus, a replication of this study should include a grouping of students on some overall measure of interest in volunteering. Within the group of the students who do plan to volunteer on campus, there may be observable differences by type of incentive.

The ranking of interest in specific volunteer opportunities has both theoretical and practical implications. That the homecoming committee, the campus recruitment organization, and the co-ed service fraternity generated the most interest suggests an Enterprising (Holland, 1985) orientation among first-time entering students. Sergent and Sedlacek (1990) found significant differences in the vocational interests of students volunteering for different campus organizations. Specifically, they found that students in the campus recruitment organization were most often Enterprising, and that students in the co-ed service fraternity were very often Enterprising. Although the homecoming committee was not part of the Sergent and Sedlacek study, this volunteer opportunity seems similar to the campus recruitment organization in its "promotional" bent. To the extent that the first-time entering freshmen in our study do tend to be Enterprising, this can be viewed as support for Garland's (1985) conclusion that vocationalism prevails among students of today.

There was apparently some sense of "social interest" (Adler, 1964) among the first-time entering students we surveyed. The campus hotline, which Sergent and Sedlacek found to be comprised of mainly Social (Holland, 1985) type volunteers, ranked fourth as an interest area. However, two other "helping" organizations, the counseling center and the health center, were at the bottom of the ranking. Students were also less interested in tutoring student athletes than they were in most of the other volunteer opportunities.

While it is interesting to speculate about the vocational orientations of students based on their volunteer interests, our findings in this area are also of practical value. As student affairs professionals concerned with promoting student involvement, we can ask ourselves, "What is it about the homecoming committee and the campus recruitment organization that makes them more attractive to students than the counseling center and the health center?" Aside from the different vocational interests implied, there are more "superficial" differences that may warrant our attention. For example, the homecoming committee and the campus recruitment organization offer volunteers high visibility that may not be characteristic of other campus volunteer positions. If students are motivated by high visibility, they may more inclined to volunteer for helping organizations that incorporate volunteers in their campus outreach efforts (e.g., health fairs; communication workshops in the residence halls).

Another notable aspect of the volunteer opportunities most

popular with first-time entering students is that they directly or indirectly pertain to promoting the university. The campus recruitment organization provides tours to prospective students and their parents; the homecoming committee plans an annual event whose expressed purpose is generating pride and enthusiasm (and money!) for the university; and the co-ed service fraternity undertakes community service projects in the name of the university. To the extent that students identify with the university and want to promote its interests, they will volunteer for organizations that exhibit "school spirit". For helping organizations that of necessity put most of their emphasis on direct service, this may imply a challenge to become more involved in campus events like homecoming. In fact, such organizations would do well to mobilize the positive energy of student volunteers in these efforts (e.g., making a health center float for the homecoming parade).

Finally, the volunteer organizations that generated the most interest among first-time entering students were those that offer the opportunity to meet and interact with a large number of people. In fact, the homecoming committee may have been the most popular volunteer opportunity precisely because it is associated with one of the biggest social events on campus. Student affairs professionals charged with recruiting for other campus organizations might do well to highlight whatever opportunities exist for volunteers to meet people and socialize.

Research on volunteer interests among first-time entering students moves us toward a better understanding how to get students

involved in general. The results of this study suggest that incentives do not play an important role in motivating students to volunteer. However, this issue deserves further attention. What we did learn was that students tended to be interested in volunteer positions that allow them to interact with people in an "enterprising" manner, as opposed to serving in a more direct helping capacity. Finally, we demonstrated how certain features of the more popular volunteer opportunities could be incorporated by those campus organizations attempting to generate greater student interest.

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Table 1

A Rank Ordering of Interest Levels in Eight Campus Volunteer Opportunities, with Means and Standard Deviations

Volunteer Opportunity	Rank	M	SD
Homecoming Committee	1	2.90	1.18
Campus Recruitment (conducting campus tours)	2	2.92	1.16
Co-ed Service Fraternity	3	2.95	1.09
Campus Hotline (peer counseling)	4	3.03	1.23
Student Union Programming Board	5	3.08	1.10
Athletic Department (tutoring)	6	3.13	1.21
Counseling Center (research; disabled student services)	7	3.18	1.11
Health Center (peer education; administrative support).	8	3.28	1.17

Note. Means are based on responses to the following scale: 1 = very interested; 2 = somewhat interested; 3 = don't know; 4 = somewhat disinterested; 5 = very disinterested.

Note. N = 850 (52% male, 48% female).

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